

Legislature

Committee chairperson and members of the committee:

I am writing in favor of proposed bill number 6158, a bill concerning the subject of allowing physicians to opt out of the mandatory state vaccine procurement program and have the choice of where to obtain childhood vaccines, including the private market.

In contrast to this there is a mandate requiring physicians in Connecticut to use state provided vaccines for children under 18. This is the mandate that I do oppose and I will proceed to explain why. In giving these explanations, i am also hoping to reiterate that I am in favor of bill 6158.

I am a pediatrician from Ridgefield, Connecticut with offices both in Ridgefield and Wilton Connecticut which serve children not only from these two towns, but also from the surrounding towns. Our office takes pride in offering the finest, most up to date medical care to our patients. We work hard at keeping our patients healthy by providing recommended preventative medicine in a timely manner. This includes the struggle of keeping our children's vaccines up to date.

As a pediatrician practicing in Connecticut, I have been recently mandated by the state to procure vaccines from the department of public health. In many ways this mandate negatively affects my ability to give the best care to my patients. For example this flu season, the state limited, by age, who we could give the flu vaccine. There were times when I had patients in my office who wanted to get the flu vaccine, but I was unable to provide it to them. Once turned away, these patients are at a disadvantage and most likely did not get vaccinated this flu season. This increases their risk of getting the flu, their risk of complications of the flu and the risk of them spreading the flu. The children and people of Connecticut end up suffering. In addition, this brings down Connecticut's immunization rates, which is exactly the opposite of what our goal is.

Another way this mandate negatively affects my practice is by the increase in operating costs that our office has experienced since it was put in place. This mandate requires much more administrative work from my office, more paperwork, more registered nurse (non patient contact) hours worked. With this increase in workload, this mandate also takes away time for direct patient care. More of our staff is working on the paperwork, and thus, spending less time with our patients. With this increase in administrative work, there also is less time for crucial charting of patient records. This also negatively affects patient care as we all know that accurate medical records are such an important aspect of medicine. I have heard many pediatricians discussing how they could manage in this stressful type of environment. Back and forth talk of other ways of cutting costs included decreasing office hours, closing offices on weekends and potentially sending more patients to the emergency room for care. We may even see many of our best, experienced pediatricians moving out of Fairfield County, as it is a county with very high living costs. All of these methods of trying to make ends meet, will inevitably contribute to inconsistent, low quality medical care for the children of our state.

Knowing that the increase in operating costs will likely persist, there is a high probability that

my office, and many other pediatric offices, will have to cut down our staff by laying staff off, or not replacing employees when they leave. In addition to the loss of employees inevitably negatively impacting patient care, it will also lead to decrease in job opportunities in Connecticut. At this point in time, this would not be beneficial for the constituents in the state of Connecticut.

In summary, if passed, the proposed bill that I am in favor of will definitely allow for more complete, consistent medical care for the children of Connecticut. They will also still allow for the vaccination of all children in Connecticut, and potentially allow for the highest vaccination rates that we can achieve in Connecticut. The bill will also potentially benefit us in other ways, one of which is by keeping Connecticut job rates up.

Please support the bill number 6158

Thank you for your time

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